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All the Adam Schiff Transcripts

Newly released documents show he knew all along that there was no proof of Russia-Trump collusion.

By

The Editorial Board

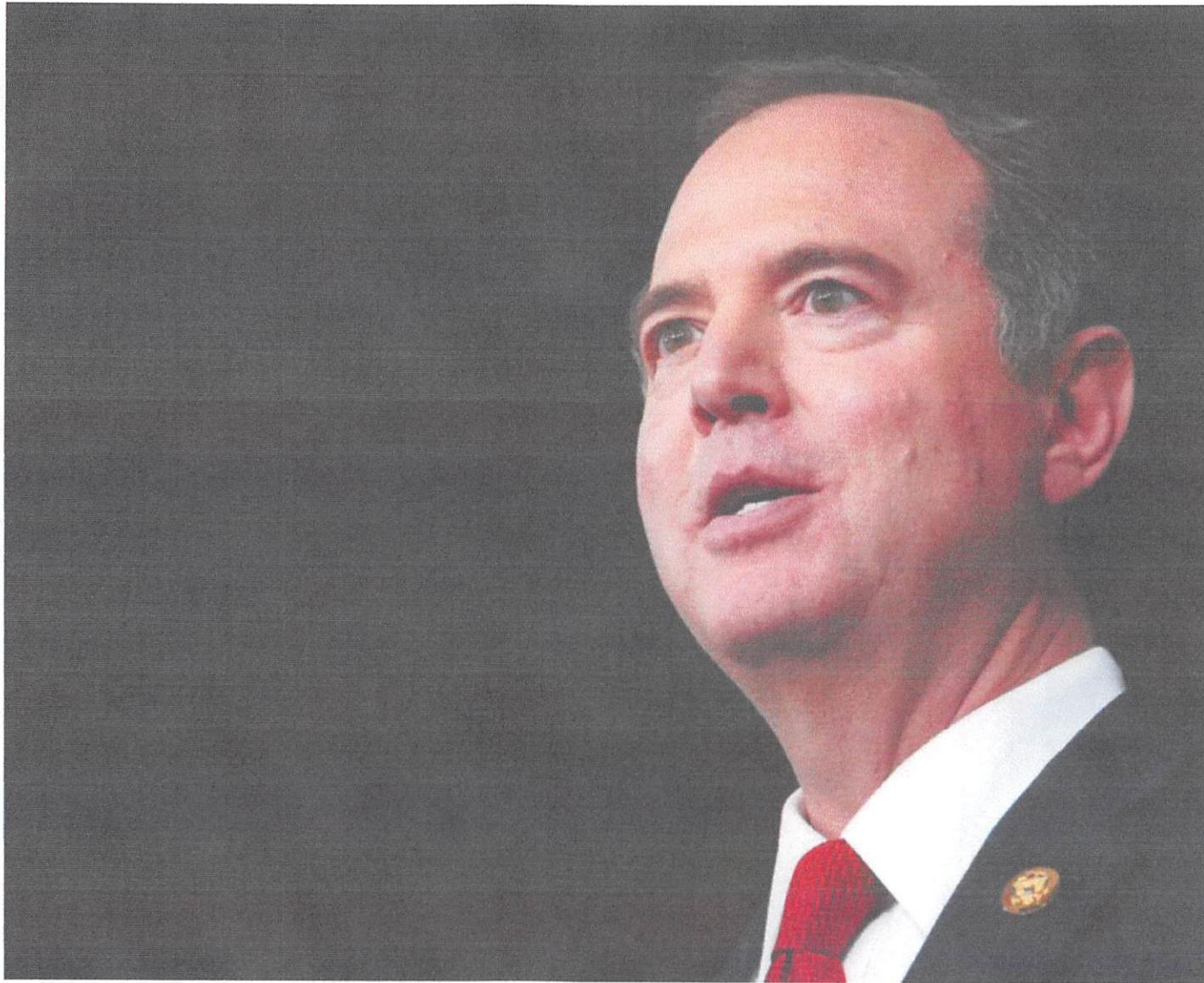
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Rep. Adam Schiff on Jan. 28.

PHOTO: JACQUELYN MARTIN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Americans expect that politicians will lie, but sometimes the examples are so brazen that they deserve special notice. Newly released Congressional testimony shows that Adam Schiff spread falsehoods shamelessly about Russia and Donald Trump for three years even as his own committee gathered contrary evidence.

The House Intelligence Committee last week released 57 transcripts of interviews it conducted in its investigation into Russia's meddling in the 2016 election. The committee probe started in January 2017 under then-Chair Devin Nunes and concluded in March 2018 with a report finding no evidence that the Trump campaign conspired with the Kremlin. Most of the transcripts were ready for release long ago, but Mr. Schiff oddly refused to release them after he became chairman in 2019. He only released them last week when the White House threatened to do it first.

Now we know why. From the earliest days of the collusion narrative, Mr. Schiff insisted that he had evidence proving the plot. In March 2017 on MSNBC, Mr. Schiff teased that he couldn't "go into particulars, but there is more than circumstantial evidence now."

In December 2017 he told CNN that collusion was a fact: "The Russians offered help, the campaign accepted help. The Russians gave help and the President made full use of that help." In April 2018, Mr. Schiff released his response to Mr. Nunes's report, stating that its finding of no collusion "was unsupported by the facts and the investigative record."

None of this was true, and Mr. Schiff knew it. In July 2017, here's what former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper told Mr. Schiff and his colleagues: "I never saw any direct empirical evidence that the Trump campaign or someone in it was plotting/conspiring with the Russians to meddle with the election." Three months later, former Obama Attorney General Loretta Lynch agreed that while she'd seen "concerning" information, "I don't recall anything being briefed up to me." Former Deputy AG Sally Yates concurred several weeks later: "We were at the fact-gathering stage here, not the conclusion stage."

The same goes for the FBI agents who started the collusion probe in 2016. Most remarkable, former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe admitted the bureau's reason for opening the case was nonsense. Asked in December 2017 why the FBI obtained a secret surveillance warrant on former Trump aide Carter Page, rather than on George Papadopoulos (whose casual conversation with a foreign diplomat was the catalyst for the probe), Mr. McCabe responded: "Papadopoulos' comment didn't particularly indicate that he was the person that had had—that was interacting with the Russians." No one else was either.

On it went, a parade of former Obama officials who declared under oath they'd seen no evidence of collusion or conspiracy— Susan Rice, Ben Rhodes, Samantha Power. Interviews with Trump campaign or Administration officials also yielded no collusion evidence. Mr. Schiff had access to these transcripts even as he claimed he had "ample" proof of collusion and wrote his false report.

He's still making it up. Last week he said the transcripts contain "evidence of the Trump campaign's efforts to invite, make use of, and cover up Russia's help in the 2016 presidential election."

The question we'd ask our friends in the media is when are they going to stop playing the fool by putting him on the air? Mr. Schiff is a powerful figure with access to secrets that the rest of us don't have and can't check. He misled the country repeatedly on an issue that consumed American politics.

President Trump often spreads falsehoods and invents facts, but at least he's paid a price for it in media criticism and public mistrust. An industry of media fact checkers is dedicated to parsing his every word. As for Mr. Schiff, no one should ever believe another word he says.

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